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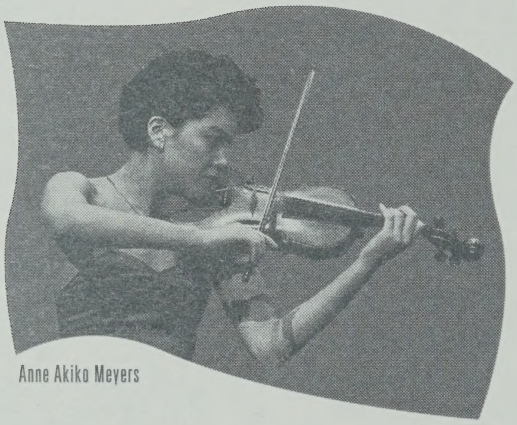
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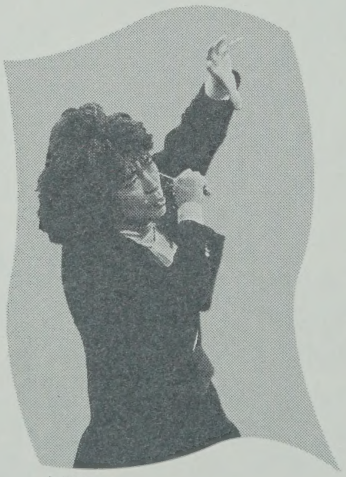
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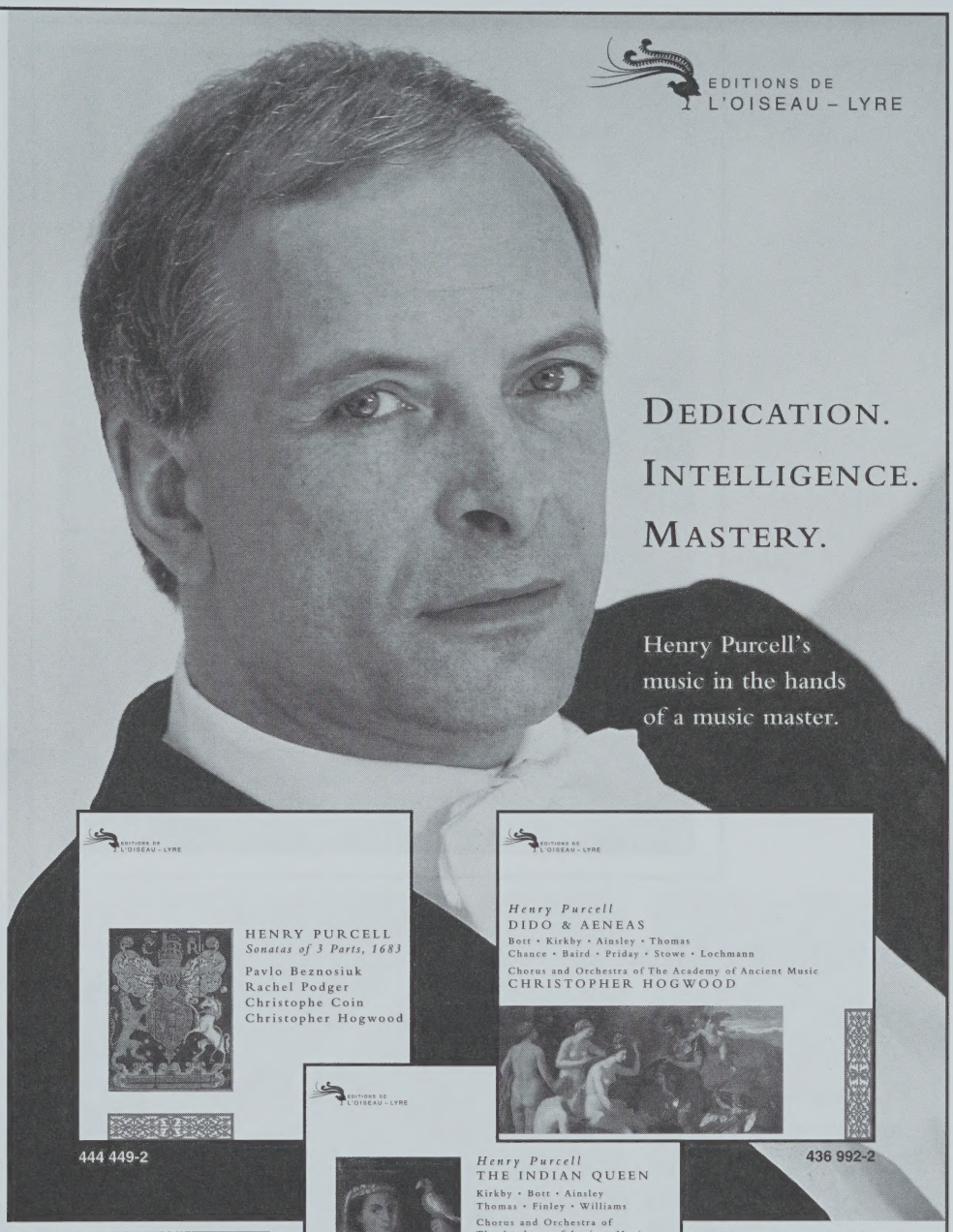
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Handel & Haydn Society
Christopher Hogwood, Artistic Director
1995-1996 Season

Friday, November 3, 1995 at 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, November 5 at 3:00 p.m.
Symphony Hall, Boston

Christopher Hogwood, Conductor
Charles Neidich, Clarinet

Hebrides Overture, Op. 26 [1832] — Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809–1847)

Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat Major, Op. 57 [1810] — Louis Spohr (1784–1859)
Allegro
Adagio
Rondo–Alla Polacca

– Intermission –

Introduction, Theme and Variations in B flat Major for Clarinet and Orchestra [c. 1829] — Gioacchino Rossini (1792–1868)

Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90, "Italian" [1833] — Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
Allegro vivace
Andante con moto
Con moto moderato
Saltarello–Presto

Christopher Hogwood, Conductor



One of the world's most active conductors, Christopher Hogwood is an internationally-recognized pioneer in "Historically-Informed Performance," presenting music on the instruments and with the performing styles of the period in which it was composed. He is the founder of The Academy of Ancient Music, the first British orchestra formed to play Baroque and Classical music on instruments appropriate to the period. He now shares with that orchestra a busy schedule of performances, touring, and recording. In addition to being H&H Artistic Director, Mr. Hogwood is Principal Guest Conductor of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, a modern-instrument ensemble, and Artistic Director of the annual Mozart Festival in Washington D.C. He is also active conducting opera throughout the world and on several recordings, and is a regular guest conductor of the Australian Opera. Mr. Hogwood enjoys a fine reputation as a harpsichordist and clavichord player and is a highly successful recording artist for London Records/L'Oiseau-Lyre. He has also made his mark in the fields of television and video and as a popular radio broadcaster. He has written a number of books, including his acclaimed biography of Handel, published by Thames & Hudson. Christopher Hogwood was made a Commander of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth in 1989.

Charles Neidich, Clarinet



Charles Neidich has been mesmerizing audiences and critics alike since his spectacular 1974 New York recital debut as a Yale University junior. He now performs worldwide in recital, with orchestras, and in chamber music. In recent seasons, Mr. Neidich has performed with the Juilliard String Quartet, Mendelssohn String Quartet, American String Quartet, Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society and the Da Camera Society in Houston. He tours regularly with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the New York Woodwind Quintet. He has also performed with such orchestras as the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the National Orchestra of Taiwan, the American Symphony, and the Berlin Radio Orchestra, and has made numerous appearances at summer festivals. Mr. Neidich has recently become deeply involved in authentic performance practice on period instruments. On a May 1994 European tour with Tafelmusik, he performed his reconstruction of the original Mozart Clarinet Concerto on a copy of a late-eighteenth century basset clarinet. In addition, his repertoire includes new music and he has presented several premieres of leading twentieth-century composers. Mr. Neidich is a winner of several top European prizes including the 1982 Munich International Competition. He won the Walter W. Naumburg Competition in 1985, the first major clarinet competition in the United States, an award which established his prominence as a soloist. Among Mr. Neidich's many recordings are Beethoven Wind Music and Rossini and Mozart *Harmoniemusik* arrangements, performed with the wind septet Mozzafiato. He has also completed recordings of the Mozart Quintet, Kegelstadt Trio, and a quartet arrangement of the B-flat violin sonata (with members of the L'Archi Budelli Quartet and Robert Levin, fortepiano) as part of an ongoing recording project on period instruments for Sony's Vivarte label.

The Handel & Haydn Society

The Handel & Haydn Society is a premier chorus and period orchestra under the artistic direction of renowned conductor Christopher Hogwood. H&H is a leader in "Historically-Informed Performance," performing music on the instruments and with the styles of the period in which it was composed for an authentic sound and concert experience. Founded in 1815, H&H is the oldest continuously-performing arts organization in the country, with a long tradition of musical excellence. In the nineteenth century, the Society gave the American premieres of several Baroque and Classical works, including Handel's *Messiah* (1818), which H&H has performed every year since 1854, *Samson* (1845), *Solomon* (1855), and *Israel in Egypt* (1859), and Bach's B Minor Mass (1887) and *St. Matthew Passion* (1889). In recent years, H&H has achieved widespread acclaim through recordings on the London Records/L'Oiseau-Lyre label, national broadcasts, and performances across North America. In addition to its Symphony Series at Boston's Symphony Hall, H&H offers a Chamber Series with concerts at both Jordan Hall at New England Conservatory and Sanders Theatre in Cambridge. H&H's innovative educational program brings enjoyment and knowledge of classical music to over 5,000 students in 45 schools throughout Massachusetts.

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Romantic Innovation

Charles Neidich

The early nineteenth century was a time of great musical innovation and collaboration. In the first twenty years, wind instruments, in particular, witnessed a greater spate of development than they had undergone in the entire previous century. Composers, often virtuoso performers themselves, worked closely with famous performers to stretch the bounds of their instruments. The performers, in turn, collaborated with instrument makers, not only adding refinements but also making radical changes that expanded the expressive and virtuosic potential of the instruments.

Spohr Clarinet Concerto No. 2

The clarinet was particularly influenced by this kind of collaboration that had begun at the end of the eighteenth century with Mozart and the clarinetist Anton Stadler. Indeed, the clarinet became one of the most sought-after solo instruments in Europe in the early nineteenth century due to the popularity of the great virtuosi Heinrich Joseph Baermann and Johann Simon Hermstedt. Both performers collaborated closely with composers—Baermann with Carl Maria von Weber and Hermstedt with Louis Spohr—and did much to popularize their music. While Baermann was known for tonal beauty and the patrician style he brought to clarinet playing, Hermstedt was hailed as a virtuoso without parallel who sometimes broke the bounds of the clarinet in his pursuit of dramatic flair. In 1808, Günther Friedrich Karl I, Duke of Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, was so taken with Hermstedt's playing that he invited Spohr to write a clarinet concerto for the virtuoso. Thus began a twenty-year association between Spohr and Hermstedt that resulted in four clarinet concertos, two sets of variations, a potpourri for clarinet and orchestra, and six German songs. Each of these compositions required an innovation in clarinet design and, as a body of work, did much to shape the instrument's development in the nineteenth century.

Spohr was so impressed with Hermstedt's command that he wrote the commissioned concerto with little regard to the limitations of the clarinet; indeed, the work was nearly unplayable on Hermstedt's five-key clarinet. Undaunted, Hermstedt virtually redesigned the instrument, developing a new clarinet with thirteen keys that could play all the chromatic notes, especially in the low register. This new instrument was so revolutionary that Spohr described it thoroughly in the preface to the concerto's first publication in 1810. And the work's success was so great that Hermstedt was appointed music director at Sondershausen.

In 1810, Hermstedt asked Spohr to write a new concerto for him to play at the festival in Frankenhausen, the first music festival held in Germany. The resulting work, the Clarinet Concerto No. 2 in E flat, op. 57, began where the first concerto left off; the difficult bravura runs, arpeggios up to high C, and very long phrases make no allowance for limitations of breath. To this day, Spohr's Clarinet Concerto No. 2 remains one of the most challenging of all clarinet concertos. It also epitomizes both the strengths and weaknesses of Spohr's writing. Spohr belonged to that generation of early Romantics that included Weber, Hummel, and Reicha, among others, who changed the course of music decisively and were immensely successful during their lifetimes, yet who are all virtually forgotten at present. Indeed, Spohr, with Weber, was probably the most important of this generation. He was an innovator whose operas used dramatic devices such as leitmotifs that anticipated Wagner, and he was known for a lilting chromaticism which foreshadowed Liszt. His oratorios set the stage for Mendelssohn's later achievements. As one of the leading violin virtuosi of his time, Spohr also did much to advance the techniques of many of the leading violinists of the next generation.

Spohr's reputation quickly faded, however, as people reared on the intensely dramatic music of Beethoven came to find his winding chromaticism "old-fashioned" or quaint. In the Clarinet Concerto No. 2, we find wonderfully imaginative orchestration, very surprising harmonic turns,

and sympathetic melodies. Yet, formally, it is completely conventional. Like other composers of his generation, Spohr was not yet able to break free of what Charles Rosen called the "classicizing style of composition" and used the forms of Mozart and Haydn. Like others of his time as well, he used harmony as a way of coloring his ideas of the moment, not as the means of organizing the dramatic progression of his music. This explains why the Clarinet Concerto, while it travels to very foreign keys such as D flat and G flat, lacks the clear dramatic high point we have come to expect. In a very happy turn of events (especially for clarinetists, for whom it forms such an important part of their repertoire), Spohr's music has begun a resurgence of popularity as people are once again beginning to delight in its fireworks and charms of the moment.



Felix Mendelssohn
Portrait by Eduard Magnus (1845)

Rossini's Introduction, Theme and Variations for Clarinet

Along with the concerto, the most popular form for the virtuoso historically has been the brilliant theme and variations. In looking at early nineteenth-century concert programs, we find this form to predominate, as performers found it to be the ideal way to demonstrate their prowess in ornamentation and virtuosic display. Gioacchino Antonio Rossini, no stranger to popular forms, tried his hand at it with great success. His *Introduction, Theme and Variations* has become one of the standards of clarinet repertoire. It is based on arias from two Rossini operas which were popular at the time; the Introduction is a florid elaboration of Amaltea's aria "La pace mia smarrita" from Act Two of *Mosè in Egitto* and the Theme, elaborated in five brilliant variations, comes from the famous scene and aria "Mura felici" from Rossini's *La donna del lago.* It is not certain, however, whether Rossini really wrote the *Introduction, Theme and Variations* or if someone else did and merely attributed it to the famous composer, a practice not at all uncommon. It is, in any case, one of the most brilliant and charming works that we have for clarinet, and the slow fourth variation has the touch of genius which could very well point to Rossini as its author.

The Hebrides Overture and Italian Symphony

While Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture,* op. 26 and Symphony No. 4 in A, op. 90, "Italian," two of the most popular and beloved works in the symphonic repertoire, hardly need introduction, this is not the case for most of Mendelssohn's compositions. In fact, despite champions such as Brahms and von Bülow, Mendelssohn's reputation could not withstand criticisms of conventionality and attacks of anti-Semitism which began after his death. Even so renowned a critic as Sir Donald F. Tovey wrote that "Mendelssohn's reputation, except as the composer of a few inextricably beautiful and original orchestral pieces, has vanished . . . "

What is remarkable about Mendelssohn's fall from grace is that he has always remained a favorite of the public. Musicians, fellow composers, and critics orchestrated his demise. Fortunately, Mendelssohn's reputation is once again on the upswing, bolstered by critical studies reestablishing him as the great innovator that he was. His overtures, *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage,* and the *Hebrides* brought programmatic music to the realm of absolute music, taking off from where Beethoven began with works such as the Sixth Symphony and *Wellington's Victory.* Indeed, the very idea of an overture as absolute music, unconnected to any kind of dramatic work, began with Mendelssohn.

One of the greatest musical prodigies who ever lived, Mendelssohn conceived many of his most famous works while in his teens and early twenties, although he did not complete and publish them for several years. He began the *Hebrides*

Overture during a summer trip to Scotland with his friend Karl Klingemann in 1829, and he seems to have conceived movements of the Italian Symphony in 1831. Characteristically, he revised both works extensively, withholding them from publication even after their premieres. It seems that he was never completely satisfied with the symphony as he would not agree to its publication, and it was published only after his death.

The accessibility of both works makes us forget their tremendously innovative, even revolutionary, character. Mendelssohn first sketched the theme of the *Hebrides Overture* from Mull on the coast of Scotland, in a letter to his family dated August 7, 1829: "In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides has affected me, I have written down the following which came into my mind." Mendelssohn took almost three years to finish the overture, and it exists in two different versions. He finished the first version in Rome on December 16, 1830 and entitled it *Die Hebriden,* although an earlier copy has the title *Die einsame Insel* (The Lonely Isle). A year later, still dissatisfied with the overture, he prepared a second version for the London premiere on May 14, 1832. Even then, he withheld the score for further revision; it was finally published by Breitkopf & Hartel in 1835. In a curious twist, they entitled it "Fingal's Cave" which was the one title Mendelssohn did not approve of. One thing is clear: the famous cave of Ossian legend itself did not inspire Mendelssohn's overture. When the steamer Mendelssohn travelled on docked at the tiny island of Staffa, known for the striking cave, the composer was too seasick to leave his bed and glimpsed the island only from afar as the steamer departed.

Of Mendelssohn's three concert overtures, the *Hebrides* is the most enigmatic, based as it is not on a text but on his impressions of nature. Mendelssohn firmly believed that music was a more precise medium of expression than words, which are always subject to misinterpretation, and was reluctant to accompany highly programmatic works with written texts. We can see in the overture how he strove to show the primitive landscape and the sense of mystery which the popular Ossian legends conveyed, and why Wagner called it a musical masterpiece by a landscape painter of the first order. The veiled parallel fifths in the opening evoke something exotic and primitive. The reappearance of the tonic in the development and the emphasis of median relationship lend a feeling of stasis and space which is perhaps unmatched in musical tone painting.

In the Italian Symphony, completed in 1833, Mendelssohn again turned to the countryside for inspiration, and while this work is not as overtly programmatic as the *Hebrides Overture*, it conjures up the composer's impressions of his Italian sojourn. The work is, perhaps after the music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, his most popular. It is also tremendously original. In the first movement, Mendelssohn introduces a small development right after the appearance of the first theme, blurring the traditional distinction between the sonata form's exposition and development. The movement is varied right from the start, with no literal repetitions. Most strikingly, the whole symphony is actually based on the opening motif, something hidden from view until the end of the final movement, "saltarello," when it reappears at a strangely brilliant moment in the winds, this time as a dying figure in the minor. Mendelssohn has been criticized for his conservative orchestration—he never used the orchestral forces that were becoming the rage as the nineteenth century progressed—but the precision with which he used the forces he chose, and the particular way in which he used winds, now make his orchestration seem surprisingly modern. The opening of the symphony is a case in point. He begins with a texture of repeated notes, the winds providing an energetic ground for the vigorous melody in the violins. Although this eventually became commonplace—where would Strauss have gotten the opening of *Don Juan*?—one does not find it much before Mendelssohn.

While the later nineteenth century, influenced as it was by the bombast of Wagner and Berlioz, looked on Mendelssohn as reactionary, we can now see him more objectively. His love of economy of means, technique of constant variation, and insistence that the language of music is separate from and even above the language of words, make him an innovator to whom composers from Brahms through the twentieth century owe a large debt.

The Handel & Haydn Society would like to recognize the following individuals, corporations, and foundations for their generous support of the H&H/Mark Morris Dance Group production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* next spring. This listing includes contributions designated specifically for the project that were received by October 25, 1995.

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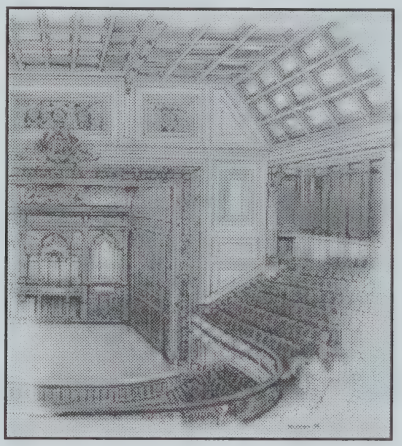
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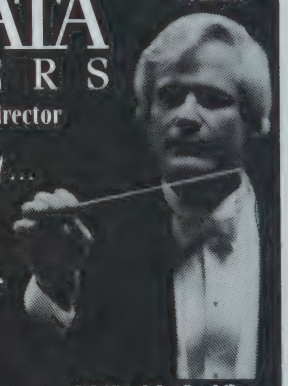
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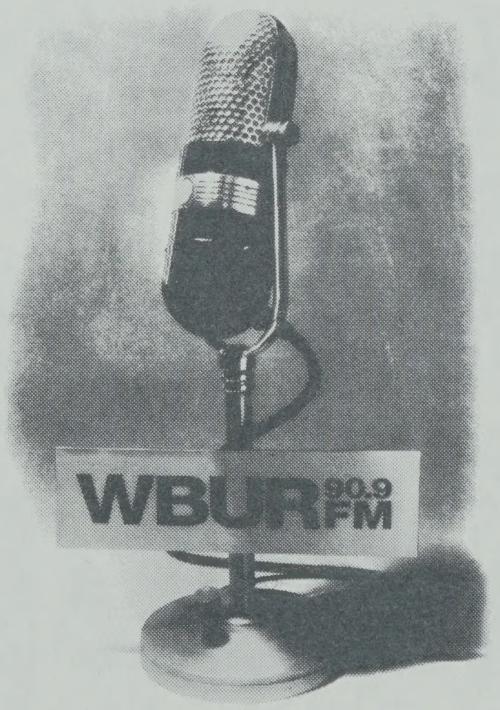
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